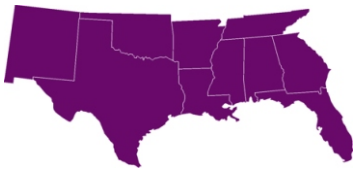
Rip Currents can be killers. How you respond could make the difference between life and death.

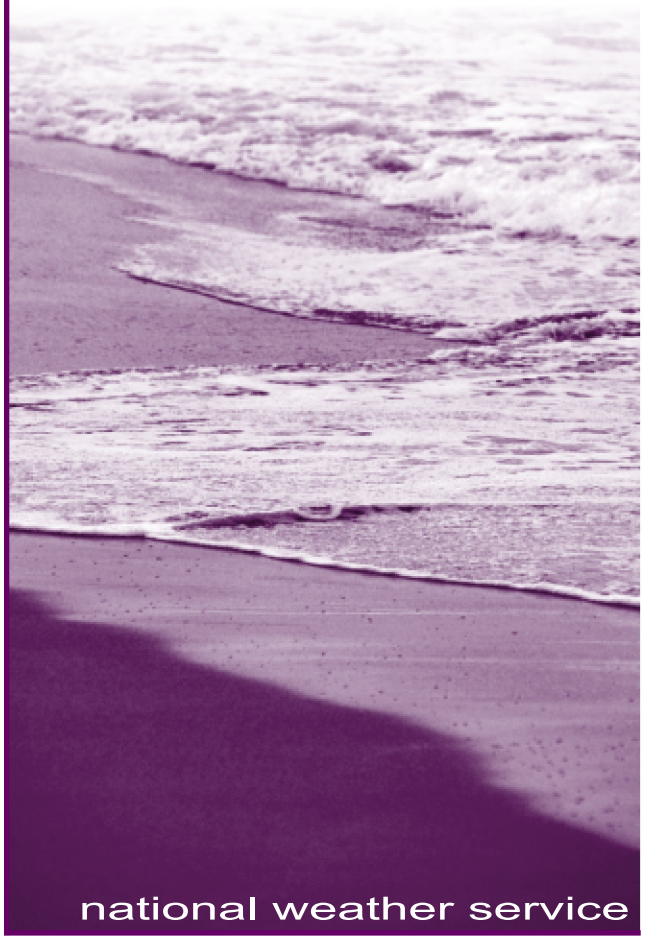
Learn more about **Rip Currents** at:
www.srh.noaa.gov/ripcurrents

No region of the National Weather Service offers more meteorological fascination and challenges than the Southern Region. The Southern Region (see map below) alone receives one third of all the rainfall in the USA, half of the nation's severe thunderstorm, flash flood and tornado events, and by far, the greatest number of tropical storm landfalls. In short, the Southern Region encompasses an area that is home to the most active weather in the world.

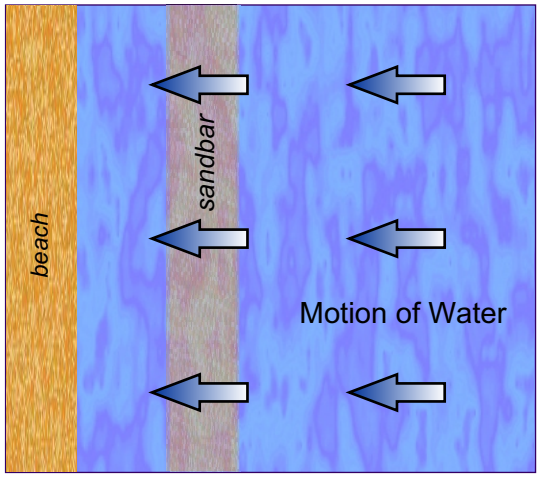


National Weather Service
Southern Region Headquarters
819 Taylor Street - Room 10A46
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
www.srh.noaa.gov

Rip currents



national weather service



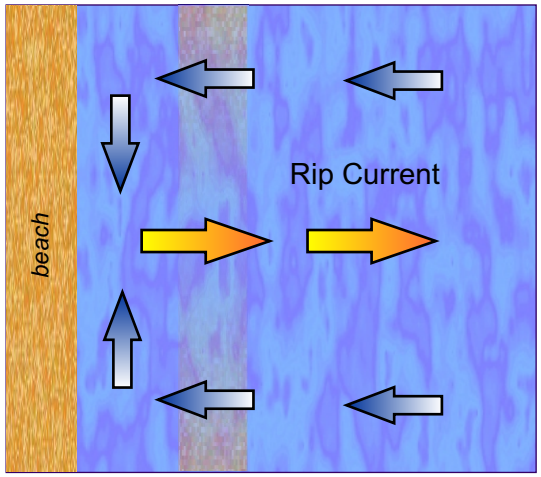
Wind pushes water toward the shore over submerged sandbars

How a **Rip Current** forms

Rip Currents form when water, piled against the shore, begins to return to deeper water. Typically, the wind pushes the water over a sandbar allowing excess water to collect near the shore. Eventually, this excess water starts to flow seaward through low areas in the sandbar, "ripping" an opening.

Rip Currents occur at all surf beaches including those along both coasts, Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. Some rip currents last from a few minutes to a few hours, while more permanent ones, associated with groins and jetties, may last days.

Other common names for rip currents: rips, rip tides, and runouts.

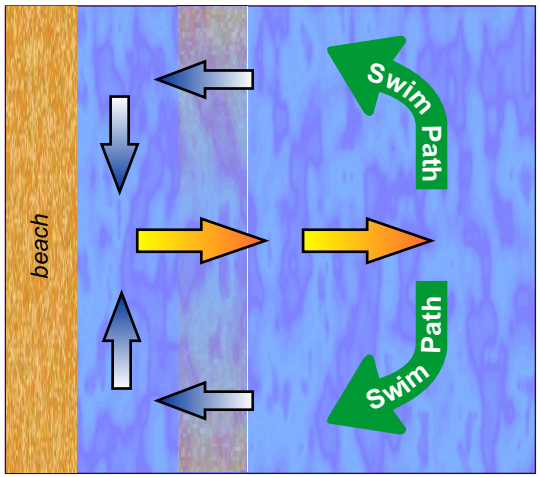


The weight of the water piled near the shore will rip an opening in the sandbar allowing water to rush seaward.

How to spot a **Rip Current**

Rip Currents are usually narrow near the beach (30 - 60 feet wide), increasing as they extend into deeper water. They can be seen from the shore by the color of the water. If the current has recently formed, you will see murky water (as compared to the surrounding water), as a result of sediment mixing. Longer lasting currents, having already scoured a path in the sandbar, will appear darker than the surrounding water.

Rip Current wave heights are lower and choppier. Look for objects or foam moving steadily seaward. Wearing polarized sunglasses can aid in locating the currents by cutting the glare. Also, look for posted flags or signs warning you of the danger.



If caught in a rip current, swim parallel to the shore to escape the flow of water, then diagonally toward the shore.

How to survive a **Rip Current**

Do know how to swim. Always swim at guarded beaches and heed the beach patrol.

Do remain calm and swim parallel to the shore if caught in a rip current. Since rip currents are relatively narrow, you should be able to swim across them quickly. If you cannot break free of the current's pull, float until it dissipates, then swim diagonally toward the shore.

Do not even think about swimming toward the shore against the current. Its force is too strong even for the strongest swimmers.

Do not attempt to rescue someone from a rip current without a flotation device.